

Voters' Behaviour and Traditional Rulership Institution in Nigeria's 2023 General Elections: A Study of Baruten Local Government Area of Kwara State

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Abstract

Nigeria has held elections in a variety of settings since her independence in 1960, and it aspires to improve on previous elections and the campaigning process. The selection and development of candidates for office are significantly influenced by traditional leaders and their followers. During election campaigns, political candidates go to the palaces of traditional monarchs to ask for their approval and support. This happens in various parts of Nigeria during elections for state and local offices as well as the presidency, when candidates visit first-class traditional rulers in all 36 states of the nation as their first stop before launching their campaigns in those states. This has now become the norm in Nigeria's modern politics. The study examines the impact of traditional rulership institutions on the behaviour of voters in Baruten Local Government in the 2023 general elections in Kwara State. It aims to determine the extent to which traditional rulers influence the choice of electorates in the Baruten Local Government area of Kwara State. To achieve the main objective, the research used mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) and data were generated from primary and secondary sources. The population size of this work covered the four main districts in the local government namely, Gwanara, Ilesha-baruba, Okuta, and Yashikira respectively. In selecting the sampling size for this study, the Taro Yamane formula was adopted. According to the study's results, 87% of participants voted during the 2023 elections; additionally, research showed that traditional monarchs have a momentous impact on their citizens. The study concluded that traditional rulers enjoy a high level of respect and credibility among their subjects and can mobilize their subjects to vote for a certain political candidate.

Keywords: Voters' Behaviour, Traditional Rulers, Influence, General Elections

Introduction

In Nigeria, it is a well-documented fact that governments always turn to traditional rulers for assistance when they feel inadequate to lead the populace in addressing important issues with dire repercussions. It makes sense that the traditional institution has been referred to as the most effective method for the federal and state governments to communicate with residents of rural areas (Malami,

2011). Traditional authorities greatly influence the choice and emergence of electoral candidates among their people. Political candidates visit the palaces of traditional rulers during election campaigns to obtain the royal seal of approval and support. Traditional leaders continue to enjoy widespread regard from the populace, which explains why candidates frequently seek their support during election campaigns (Ashiru, 2010). This occurs in different regions of Nigeria during state and local government elections as well as presidential elections when candidates visit first-class traditional rulers in each of the nation's 36 states before launching their campaigns there. This has now become the norm in Nigeria's modern politics because it is widely believed that traditional leaders have a substantial influence on their subjects' political decisions during elections, both military and civilian regimes have acknowledged the legitimacy of traditional leaders as a major factor in the establishment of political regimes (Adejumobi, 2002).

Without question, the institution is still important in modern-day Nigeria, where it continues to have a significant impact on and actively participate in informal political administration at all levels of government. Traditional masters significantly impact how people who live under them live. This is especially true in light of the meagre success of developing municipal government institutions (Murray, 2004). Traditional rulers can step in to cover the power gap if the central government declines to extend its jurisdiction into remote, rural areas. According to Olubusola's (2007) theory, traditional leaders always bring people back together with their relatives and rival social groups. They can do this because of their exalted status in society. For the most part, they serve as the community's top security officer, judge, and arbitrator during times of need.

Traditional chiefs in the Baruten local government of Kwara State also play important roles in influencing their constituents during elections by educating the electorate on political issues and benefits for the community they lead. This demonstrates how the traditional institution still holds sway during elections and cannot be marginalized to stabilize democratic governance in Nigeria. Even the harshest detractors of Nigeria's traditional chieftaincy rule would concede that they continue to be the closest governments and most successful community organizers. (Emordi and Osiki, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria has held elections in a variety of settings since gaining freedom in 1960, and it aspires to enhance both the electioneering and the results of previous elections. The vast majority of Nigerian citizens have yearned for the country to conduct free and fair elections despite the notable progress and improvement realized over the years. This is because candidates continue to use unethical tactics to retain or gain power.

The aforementioned position has further heightened the complexity of thought surrounding the roles of stakeholders in the delivery of electioneering processes that will present the desires and goals of the populace in terms of candidates that have the support of the electorate. Over time, these stakeholders' responsibilities have extended to include the participation of actors who are not part of the primary institutional framework governing electoral conduct, such as the traditional institutions and their guardians.

The functions of traditional rulers in Nigeria's election process have been the subject of numerous inquiries. Traditional leaders, who are supposed to be apolitical, have, over time, subtly and openly encouraged voters to support specific political parties or candidates, and at times they have bullied their people who are known to or are perceived as having views opposed to their wishes. Most traditional rulers in Baruten Local Government participate in partisan politics, which is one of the reasons for their institutional demotion. This practice also occasionally lowers the dignity of the traditional rulers, which can lead to social unrest or moral decay and encourage disrespect for elders and established authorities in their communities, including traditional rulers.

According to Ihemeje (2014), traditional leaders instantaneously or discursively influence the choice of candidate by providing advice to the state's council of chiefs, which occasionally reduces the accountability of politicians to the public by acting as vote brokers who garner support through compulsion and conditional exchanges. (Lemarchand and Legg 1972). However, several things are thought to be the problems causing the gradual decline of traditional rulers in their oversight of the current. According to Fatile (2010), some of these factors are systematically created, while others are self-inflicted by the traditional organization itself. The first self-inflicted cause is the appointment process' disregard for due process. In addition to the aforementioned, traditional rulers compete with one another for seniority to gain support in their quest for superiority. Traditional rulers also engross in political maneuvering by endorsing aspirants that they think would support their agenda are supported, which goes against their supposed duty of neutrality in carrying out their royal duties.

It should be mentioned that research on the functions of conventional institutions in elections has emerged and continues to do so. However, this research focused mainly on the voting behaviour of voters in Baruten Local Government in the 2023 general elections in Kwara State and to what extent traditional rulers influence electorates in the Baruten Local Government area of Kwara State.

Research Aims and Objectives

The general aim and objectives are to examine the connectivity between the influence of traditional rulers and voters' behaviour. The specific objectives include:

1. To determine the voting behaviour of voters in Baruten Local Government in the 2023 general elections in Kwara State
2. To determine the level of traditional rulers' influence on electorates in the Baruten Local Government area of Kwara State.

Conceptual Clarification

Traditional Ruler

A "traditional ruler" is the ancestral leader of one ethnicity or clan who holds the position of foremost executive power in an indigenous polity or who was ordained to this position by the cultural norms and practices of the area in question by a state government contrivance or older, and someone who is acknowledged by the State Authorities as a traditional monarch. (Ola & Tonwe, 2009; Tonwe & Osemwota, 2013). The term "traditional rulership" refers to indigenous systems in

which leaders, people with inherited positions of authority, or people with a track record of success are chosen, and installed under native laws and traditions. The institution's main purpose is to safeguard the heritage, tradition, and culture of the populace. To manage, settle, and handle issues that might arise between or within members of the group, the laws, and customs of that particular society or culture are used. They are typically regarded and addressed as the stewards of their people's customs, traditions, and customs of culture. To further clarify concepts, Malami (1978) identified three categories of traditional title holders who obtain the titles they hold from and through the people's traditions, even though the traditions differ based on the time, location, and degree of cultural enculturation.

The traditional Nigerian government had an aristocratic flair and still exerts strong control over its people. Even the warrant chief system, which the British established in the Middle-Belt and Eastern region to aid in tax collection and the upholding of the law, eventually evolved into a traditional authority and adopted the aristocratic and domineering air to compel respect and obedience. Traditional authority has great power because it is deeply rooted in group values and beliefs. This power should not be underrated because it is intricately linked to spiritual practice or cultural levels that give people's lives substance and a feeling of belonging. As a result, traditional rulers derive their authority by referencing customs and practices (Emordi & Osiki, 2008 & Ngwu, 2019).

An individual who has been conferred jurisdiction over native, cultural, customs and whose reign as a monarchy and recognized to oversight people in their daily affairs is referred to as a traditional ruler. It refers to a person who has been unanimously chosen or elected by a particular community to manage the affairs of his people under the customs and practices of the community (Yol, 2010). The term "traditional rulership institution" refers to an ancient or current structure created to govern indigenous communities or locales within the parameters of predetermined standards. This institution gets its authority from long-standing customs and traditions that set the standard for social behaviour. Similar to the government in modern society, the traditional ruler exactly governs the indigenous peoples through the assignment of specific roles and responsibilities.

Traditional rulers are a term used to describe a central authority chosen by the community's residents through cultural customs and practices and approved by the residents to manage ethnic and local matters not covered by Grover's statutes and rules. That is a group in charge of guiding residents of a town under its norms and traditions. (Traditional Rulers and Chiefs Edict, 1979). According to one definition, a traditional ruler is "the traditional leader of an ethnic community or clan who holds the office of primary executive power in an indigenous polity or who was appointed to the office in line with local traditions and whose title has been accepted as a traditional ruler by the state" (Traditional Rulers and Chiefs Edict, 1979).

Elections

Iyayi (2004) described an election as a group vote that is made legally in a chain of connected precursor and subsequent behaviour. It follows that in any contemporary nation, representational democracy cannot be discussed without elections. Elections and electoral procedures influence any contemporary nation-state's future to some degree. They serve as the conduit through which various interest groups can peacefully settle their power struggles. Therefore, elections decide how social

order changes may be enacted (Iyayi, 2004). In actuality, it is people's involvement in the process of choosing their leaders and their involvement in administration. If a review of the Nigerian elections is to be legitimate, it should typically cover all the aforementioned election-related factors. An election is a formal procedure through which a population selects a person to occupy an elected position. (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2009). According to Robert and Edward (2014), an election is a process used to choose candidates for public office from among those eligible to vote under the laws governing the voting system.

Voting is the method by which the populace exercises their sovereign right to decide who will represent them in government and what the country's political, social, and other objectives should be. Therefore, in democratic elections, the people have the chance to exercise their sovereignty by casting a ballot to legitimize their government, extend its term if required, or revoke their consent to rule. An accountable administration is built on this principle (INEC, 2011). According to Gwinn and Norton (1992), an election is a legal method of choosing a candidate for public office or signing off on a political proposal by casting a ballot. They go on to say that elections are one way for an entire community to self-organize and take official choices, and where voting is free, it also serves as a system for deciding how power is distributed in a society and a way to compel social submission with the least amount of loss of personal freedom. Freedom of decision is key to a democratic election.

According to Eya (2003), an election is a process of choosing one or more candidates for office based on a vote and between competing candidates. The technique used to choose candidates for political offices is described by Eya as the electoral process. Additionally, he views election frauds and malpractices as inappropriate unlawful, fraudulent, or moral violations that undermine equitable and transparent election procedures. According to him, a fair election process must have a few basic components, such as legal regulations establishing the electoral Bodies, Ward and constituency boundaries, Registration as a voter, political party registration, hiring, and training of temporary employees, procurement of electoral materials, logistics, candidate screening, supply of poll monitors, real voting, voter accreditation, tabulating results, and offering channels for resolving disputed outcomes.

Voting Behaviour

Most political activities revolve around voting, hence voting behavior is typically thought of as political behavior. From a political standpoint, Goldman (1996) believed that voting behavior affects decisions, particularly those made by elected officials who are selected by the electorate. However, according to Deiner's (2000) research, individualism and democratic values play a significant role in voting behaviour. According to this claim, a society's degree of individual voting freedom affects how voters behave. Democracy is unquestionably possible in places where such individual rights are protected.

According to scholars like Healy, Malhotra, and Hyunjung (2010), voters may use affect as a consequence of their political savvy and may be exposed to political stimuli that could lead to an emotional political bias. Surprise, rage, anxiety, dread, and pride are a few examples of the affective mechanisms that may affect voting behaviour. (Gomez, Hansfor and Krauss: 2007).

Researchers like Miller (2011), and Gomez, Hans, and Krauss (2007) have placed a strong emphasis on effect as a factor in voting behaviour because they believe that vexation may avert people from voting, particularly for the government that is in control. After all, its blueprint or exertion did not make them happy and helped them to overcome their vexation. Fearful individuals may need assiduous perusal and justifications prior to choosing a party or candidacy, whereas people with anxiety would vote for a candidate whose policies they "prefer". According to the definitions given above, it can be seen how closely related the ideas of traditional rulers, elections, and voter behaviour are. It also demonstrates how crucial or pertinent traditional rulers are to the processes of elections and electioneering, as well as how they are important tools for influencing voter behaviour in the areas they serve.

Electoral Process and Contemporary Governance of Traditional Rulers in Nigeria

The retention and reformulation of traditional and state politics in newly independent Nigerian states were aided by the blending of traditional and modern politics. Successful military governments in Nigeria since 1966 have been said to have depended on traditional institutions for their authority, further politicizing those institutions. Those they backed in authority were appointed over more traditional rulers. Traditional organizations lost their usual sovereignty over their people over time due to time and individual drive. Others who, to put it mildly, weren't faithful were fired or sling (Omotosho, 2010. Cited in Nweke, 2012).

Our people continue to make decisions about politics, the economy, education, and social action in many places by placing their confidence in traditional leaders. Politicians would do anything to have access to this precious social capital. (Daily Independent Newspaper, 2014). An analysis of the existing literature on traditional kingship authorities divulged the reasons for the decline of institutions, which include: self-wreak (Political affiliation in government, disrespect for cultural norms, and lack of honesty on the part of some people who get funding for the throne programs are all issues); militarized tyranny (cutting off the reign of a civilization that is submissive); societal misfortunes (upright deterioration in public life, disdain for authoritative figures and entrenched institute, as well as traditional ones); the shrinking gravitational zone and collapse of the "kingdom" ruled by kingship leaders: Local authority figures and traditional leaders are in an impasse of interest: Globalization (Kings and other ancient monarchies around the world are losing popularity and support): Politics (Recently, there has been a lot of emphasis on party affiliations) (Fayonjomi, undated).

The electoral process is divided into eight phases, according to IDEA (2010): the legal structure, preparation and conduct, education and training, enrollment of voters, election campaigns, voting operations, results verification, and post-election. However, it is correct to note that the participation of traditional leaders in some of the aforementioned sectors has gained prominence due to their legitimacy, responsiveness, and workable input and output in stewardship since amalgamation until this day.

Adesoji (2010) asserts that Embarrassment of self, decrease in remuneration, salary cessation, limitation, suspension, exile, dethronement, and murder are manifestations of the stress experienced by traditional rulers in modern Nigeria. However, it can be categorically stated that all of these indices are contemporary phenomena impacting Nigerians of all social classes and are not specific to traditional schools alone. Therefore, the stance taken here is that there is no crisis of relevance or survival for traditional authority in modern Nigeria. This is because it has remained pertinent throughout time and has resisted numerous deliberate attempts to do away with it entirely. Despite their lack of association with any political party, Nigeria's traditional rulers play a crucial influence in choosing and the emergence of electoral candidates in the country's modern political landscape. Political candidates visit the palaces of the traditional leaders in their towns during the campaigning period to receive the king's blessings and accolades. As fathers to all, traditional leaders bestow royal blessings on all aspirants who approach them because they all originate from their territories, and whoever succeeds also benefits from the traditional leaders' support. According to our reasoning, Nigerians still hold traditional leaders in high regard and regard them with awe, which explains why candidates for political office often use them as allies during the campaigning and electioneering processes. There are numerous instances of this during state and municipal elections throughout Nigeria. Even at the federal level, presidential candidates make an effort to meet with and win the approval of the nation's top traditional leaders (Amusa et al, 2012).

There is still disagreement over whether traditional leaders should take a role in contemporary governance. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA, 2007) recognized three distinct schools of thought. Those in the first group held the view that traditional institutions are historical artifacts that should be abandoned. They assert that in addition to impeding social and economic growth, these institutions also divide people and are costly to maintain. They are perceived as collaborators with colonial rulers who detested democracy and, as a result, do not belong to the recently established post-colonial sovereign (Ejiofor, 2004).

According to Ejiofor (2004), the second school of thought is made up of people who believe traditional institutions are necessary for any political change to be successful. These academics think that traditional monarchs can aid in the rebuilding of the African state because they are stewards of history and culture. Dore (2011) supports this position by stating that when policy disregards history, culture, and social context, a lot of time and money can be squandered on poorly thought-out initiatives.

The final school presents a reasonable case. It recognizes that, despite the colonial era's shortcomings with traditional institutions, "Traditions are essential assets that can support democratic governance and increase rural populations' access to essential services" (Ejiofor, 2004).

Theoretical Framework

For a better comprehension of the research, structural functionalism is used as the theory. According to the structural functionalism theory, many different components of human society must work together harmoniously to produce the intended results.

Structural Functionalism

The traditional rulership organization is established as a useful organ in Nigerian society using structural functionalism theory. According to this theory, society is made up of connected parts that work together to create a whole. Emile Durkheim, a French economist, founded structural functionalism in the late 19th century. At least in part, Durkheim's theory was an answer to evolutionary theories put forth by thinkers like E.B. Tylor. As a shared means for members of society to satiate their individual biological needs, Durkheim initially intended for social institutions to be explained in this manner. To comprehend the value of cultural and social characteristics, he explained how they affected how society and living as a whole functioned. According to Yol, (2010). He contends that functionalism guarantees that every community shares the same norms and ethics and that these norms and ethics are incorporated into the law; furthermore, He argues that these norms and ethics are incorporated into society's structure through the functions performed by traditional leaders in the communities they inhabit.

Functionalists contend that society can be equivalent to a living thing since both are made up of interrelated pieces (organs and structure) that must cooperate to allow for the entire organism to operate at its best. Parsons (1961) asserted that "the social structure is composed of the conduct of humans". He started with the interaction between two people. (Parsons, 1961). Those people have a variety of options as to how they might behave. However, several environmental and societal factors affected and limited their decisions. (Craib, 1992). Parsons (1961) asserts that each individual has demands regarding the way others might behave and react to their decisions, and those demands are founded on the accepted norms and ethics of the society in which they reside. He then transformed the concept of a task into absoluteness that suits one another in carrying out social obligations. In institutions and societal systems like the legal, educational, and economic ones, certain positions are intertwined. (Parsons 1961).

The best explanation for how traditional institutions affects voter behavior is provided by the structural functionalism theoretical paradigm. Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons, more subsequently, are linked to the notion. (Fisher, 2010). Functionalists, according to Susser (1992), prefer to view social and political structures from a more broad and more natural perspective. It is claimed that social practices play a functional part in maintaining the system as a whole.

The theoretical framework of structural functionalism is pertinent to this research because traditional rulers have socially outlined roles and obligations to fulfill for their neighborhoods. From the perspective of organizations and structures, traditional leaders provide a way to arrange social components. It is well known that traditional beliefs in the Nigerian setting sway and limit the behaviour of their subjects. There is a strong emphasis on laws, norms, and regulations among the people of Nigeria in their traditional environment. One of the duties of traditional leaders is to ensure that government involvement leads to development in their communities, and to do this frequently necessitates them getting involved in partisan politics to advance growth in each of their areas. Therefore, traditional leaders play significant parts in elections by influencing voter behaviour to accomplish their desired outcomes.

Methodology

A descriptive survey approach was adopted by drawing data from both primary and secondary sources. The population size of this work covered the four districts in the local government namely, Gwanara, Ilesha-Baba, Okuta, and Yashikira respectively, which approximated 240,127 (National Bureau of Statistics Annual Data 2012). The study chose those areas because they have separate Emir, they were districts and most populous areas in the Baruten local government area of Kwara State. The study adopted the Excel chat, quantitative, qualitative and frequency count to analyze the demographic data of the respondents, in selecting the sampling size for this work, the Taro Yamane formula was adopted. The Yamane formula as expressed by Israel (1992) is expressed as:

$$n = \frac{N}{K + N(e)^2}$$

Where: n = Sample size

N = Total population of Baruten (Four main districts which are Gwanara, Ilesha-Baruba, Okuta, and Yashikira) Local Government

$$k = 1$$

$$e = 0.05\%$$

$$n = 240,127$$

$$n = \frac{240,127}{1 + 240,127 (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{240,127}{240,128 (0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{240,127}{600.32}$$

$$n = 399.99 \quad \text{Approximately, } n = 400$$

Consequently, 400 people make up the study's dataset. 400 copies of this questionnaire were given out to the four major districts. which are Gwanara, Ilesha-Baruba, Okuta, and Yashikira in the Baruten Local Government area of Kwara state. Based on the above formulae, simple percentages were used for the allotted questionnaire to each district presented in the table below.

Table 1 Number of allotted questionnaires for the selected districts

S/N	Districts	Total Population	Allotted Questionnaire
1.	Gwanara	64,744	108
2.	Ilesha-baruba	47,031	78
3.	Okuta	65,737	110
4.	Yashikira	62,615	104
	Total	240,127	400

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Table 2 Respondents Rate

	Items	Number	%
1	Quantity sampling	400	
2	Quantity of completed and duly returned	388	97%
3	Quantity received but incompletely filled	5	1.25%
4	Quantity of unresponsive respondents	7	1.75%
	Total		100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Four hundred questionnaire were distributed in Gwanara, Ilesha-Baruba, Okuta, and Yashikira districts in the Baruten Local Government area of Kwara state; Seven (7) participants in all were unable to be contacted. Out of the 400 questionnaires that were distributed, 393 were successfully retrieved but 388 questionnaires were correctly and accurately completed.

Table 3 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	207	53.4%
Female	181	46.6%
Total	388	100%
Ages	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 21 years old	38	9.8%
22-25 years old	47	12.1%
26-35 years old	190	49%
36 and above	113	29.1%
Total	388	100%
Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Civil Servant	190	49%
Self Employed	68	17.5%
Artisan	96	24.7%
Others	34	8.8%
Total	388	100%

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	110	28.4%
Married	230	59.3%
Divorcee	23	5.9%
Widow	15	3.9%
Widower	10	2.5%
Total	388	100%

Source: Survey data collected from fieldwork, 2023

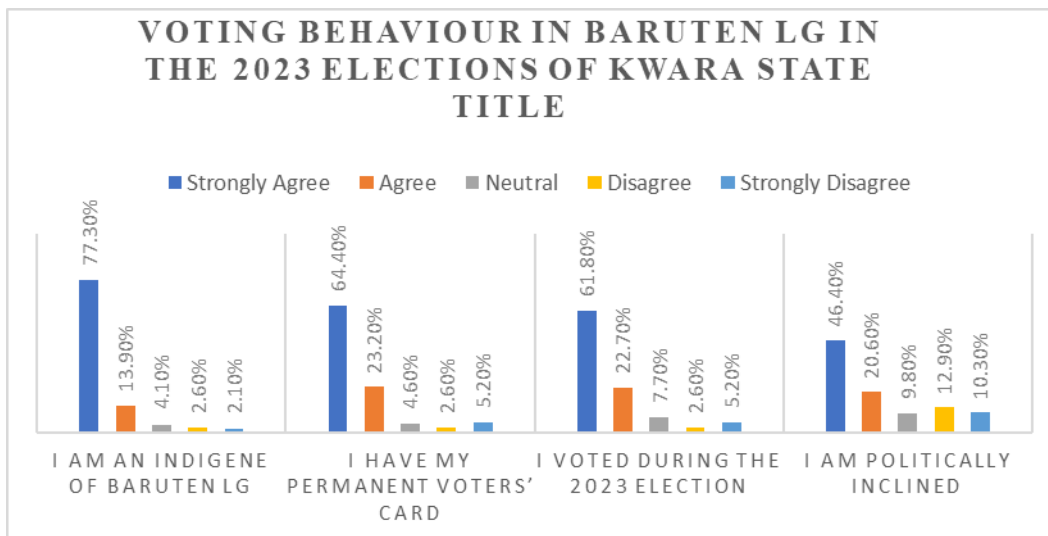
Analysis

According to the data above, 207 participants, representing 53.4% of the total, were male, while 181 participants, representing 46.6%, were female. Therefore, the majority of the respondents were male. It is equally indicated in the table that 38 respondents representing 9.8% were less than 21years; 47 respondents representing 12.1% were within age 22-25years while 190 respondents representing 49% were within age 26-35years; 113 respondents representing 29.1% were within age 36years and above. This implies that most of the participants were between the ages of 26-35 years.

Additionally, on occupation, the table above shows that 190 respondents representing 49% were civil servants; 68 respondents representing 17.5% were self-employed; 96 respondents representing 24.7% were artisans; 34 respondents representing 8.8% were not specific on their occupation. Therefore, most of the respondents were civil servants. On marital status, the data above shows that 110 respondents representing 28.4% were single; 210 respondents representing 59.3% married; 23 respondents representing 5.9% were divorced; 15 respondents representing 3.9% were widows while 10 respondents representing 2.5% were widowers. Therefore, the majority of the respondents are married.

Voting Behavior in Baruten Local Government in the 2023 Elections of Kwara State

Regarding the voting behaviour of voters in Baruten Local Government in the 2023 elections of Kwara State; Four (4) questions were designed to capture respondents' opinions on voting behaviour.



Source: Survey data collected from fieldwork, 2023

The chart above represented the voting behaviour of voters in Baruten Local Government in the 2023 elections of Kwara State. Data revealed that 300 respondents representing 77.3% strongly agreed that they were indigenes of Baruten Local Government of Kwara State; 54 respondents representing 13.9% agreed that they were indigenes of Baruten Local Government of Kwara State; 16 respondents representing 4.1% were neutral; 10 respondents representing 2.6% disagreed that they were indigene of Baruten Local Government of Kwara State while 8 respondents representing 2.1% strongly disagreed that they were an indigene of Baruten Local Government of Kwara State. This implies that most of the respondents were indigenes of the Baruten Local Government of Kwara State.

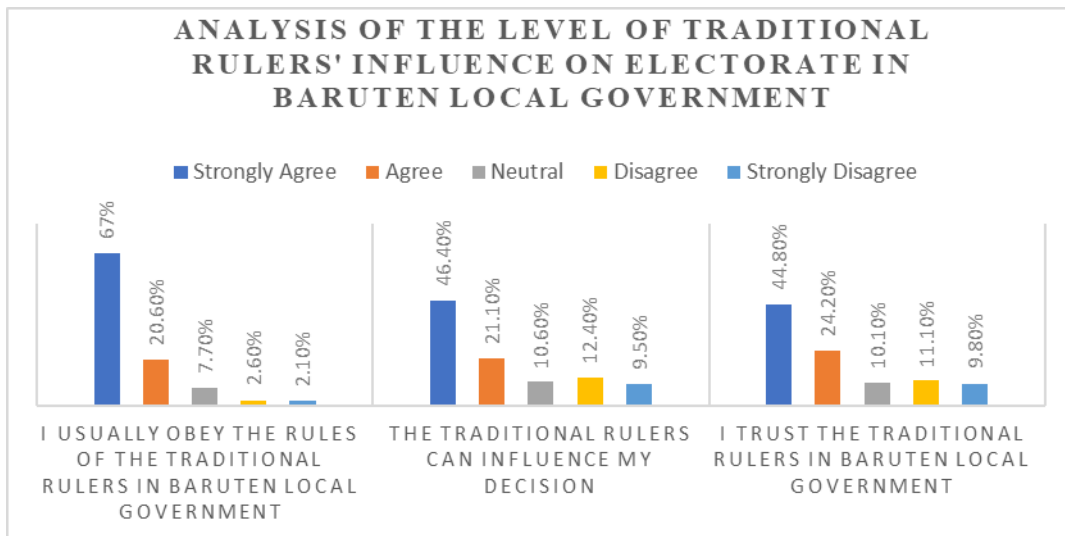
Concerning the ownership of permanent voters' cards, 250 respondents representing 64.4% strongly agreed that they have permanent voters' cards, 90 respondents representing 23.2% agreed that they have permanent voters' cards; 18 respondents representing 4.6% were neutral, meanwhile, 10 respondents representing 2.6% disagreed that they have permanent voters' card while 20 respondents representing 5.2% strongly disagreed that they have permanent voters' card. This implies that most of the respondents have permanent voter's cards.

Also, concerning participation in the 2023 election, 240 respondents representing 61.8% strongly agreed that they voted during the 2023 election; 88 respondents representing 22.7% agreed that they voted during the 2023 election; 30 respondents representing 7.7% were neutral; 10 respondents representing 2.6% disagreed that they voted during the 2023 election while 20 respondents representing 5.2% strongly disagreed that they voted during the 2023 election. This implies that most of the respondents voted during the 2023 election.

On whether respondents are politically inclined, 180 respondents representing 46.4% strongly agreed that they were politically inclined; 80 respondents representing 20.6% agreed that they were politically inclined, 38 respondents representing 9.8% were neutral; meanwhile 50 respondents representing 12.9% disagreed that they were politically inclined while 40 respondents representing 10.3% strongly disagreed that they were politically inclined. This implies that most of the respondents were politically inclined.

The Level of Traditional Rulers' Influence on Electorates in the Baruten Local Government Area of Kwara State

Regarding the level of traditional rulers' influence on electorates in the Baruten local government area of Kwara State, three (3) questions were designed to capture respondents' opinions on traditional rulers' influence on electorates.



Source: Survey data collected from fieldwork, 2023

The conversation above demonstrated the extent to which local traditional authorities influenced voters in the Baruten local government area of Kwara State. Data revealed that 260 respondents representing 67% strongly agreed that they usually obey the rules of the traditional rulers in Baruten Local Government, 80 participants representing 20.6% agreed that they usually obey the rules of the traditional rulers in Baruten Local Government; 30 respondents representing 7.7% were neutral; 10 respondents representing 2.6% disagreed that they usually obey the rules of the traditional rulers in Baruten Local Government while 8 respondents representing 2.1% strongly disagreed that they usually obey the rules of the traditional rulers in Baruten Local Government. This implies that most of the participants usually obey the rules of the traditional rulers in the Baruten Local Government.

On whether the traditional rulers can influence people's decisions, 180 respondents representing 46.4% strongly agreed that traditional rulers can influence their decision; 82 respondents representing 21.1% agreed that traditional rulers can influence their decision; 41 respondents representing 10.6% were neutral; 48 respondents representing 12.4% disagreed that traditional rulers can influence their decision while 37 respondents representing 9.5% strongly disagreed that traditional rulers can influence their decision. This implies that traditional rulers can influence people's decisions.

On whether people trust the traditional rulers in Baruten Local Government, 174 respondents representing 44.8% strongly agreed that they trust the traditional rulers in Baruten Local Government; 94 respondents representing 24.2% agreed that they trust the traditional rulers in Baruten Local Government; 39 respondents representing 10.1% were neutral; 43 respondents representing 11.1% disagreed that they trust the traditional rulers in Baruten Local Government while 38 respondents representing 9.8 % strongly disagreed that they trust the traditional rulers in Baruten Local Government. This implies that most of the respondents trust the traditional rulers in Baruten Local Government

Discussion of Findings

The first objective of this study is to ascertain how voters will cast their ballots in the general election of 2023 in the Baruten Local Government. The results showed that 87% of the voters cast ballots in the elections of 2023. This finding is consistent with those made by Adeolu (2014), who observed that there was substantial public participation in the Osun 2014 election. Additionally, the CTA (2018) backed this position by pointing out that, in contrast to widespread concerns that the widespread deployment of security personnel would scare voters away from voting places, the turnout was usually very high. Out of the 913, 345 registered voters, 405, 861 submitted ballots. The result does not deviate from the impact of voter education in terms of sensitization and promotion by NGOs, civil societies, and INEC during the election processes. The results are also consistent with Ucho and Osundina's (2019) analysis of the results of the Ekiti 2018 election, which discovered that voter education improved the outcome since it motivated people to cast their ballots and supported Fayemi, the APC candidate, despite difficulties in the electioneering process.

The second objective is to determine the level of influence traditional rulers have on the residents of Baruten Local Government. The results of this research showed that traditional kings and queens have a momentous impact on their subjects. This is consistent with the research of Abu (2018), who found that traditional leaders support the government and law enforcement organizations in preserving tranquillity, law, order, and effective governance in their rural regions. As a result of the recruitment of educated individuals with royal connections into the institution, they coordinate the activities of their citizens to put government policies and programs into action and make sure that these initiatives obtain the broadest possible backing from the populace.

Traditional organizations and traditional leaders act as real conduits to the populace, facilitating their acceptance, support, and appreciation of the government's policies and programs. Additionally, they determine tax rates after consulting the local government assembly. Once more, Agbam (2021) showed a connection between community growth and the traits of traditional leaders in the study

area. This finding led to the conclusion that for traditional leaders to be effective, whether at the family or community levels, their traits needed to be upright to maximize their leadership abilities. However, it was deduced that if traditional leaders engage in activities that may not attract development like; not advising the local government on the concerns of the local communities, and not attracting investors to the community amongst others, there is little chance for such community to attract development. The research also demonstrated that traditional leaders' various levels of involvement were effective in inspiring community development initiatives. Ayuba, a high chief from the Ilorin Emirate Council (2013, as stated in Ihemeje, 2014), claimed that traditional rulers indirectly influence the election process because of their strong relationships with the community and aptitude for wisdom drawn from tradition and culture in their diverse areas.

Conclusion

This study's primary objective is to determine how traditional leaders affect citizens' voting decisions in Kwara State's Baruten Local Government. The study concluded that traditional rulers enjoy a high level of respect and credibility among their subjects and can mobilize their subjects to vote for a certain political candidate. Therefore, traditional rulers in the Baruten Local Government of Kwara State have gained a lot of dependability among their subjects to determine what candidate to vote for during elections. Despite the influence of media and other means of the electioneering campaign, this study realized that traditional rulers still control the same loyalty from their subjects and have a great influence on their subject's electoral decisions.

Recommendations

Given the above, the following recommendations are proffered:

- i. The government through the Ministry of Chiefs and Traditional Affairs needs to involve traditional leaders more in political processes as these are the custodians of the larger population in Kwara.
- ii. It is essential to put in place educational programs that will provide traditional leaders with the information and abilities they need to organize voters in their spheres of influence. The traditional chiefs in rural regions are quite knowledgeable. Traditional Rulers should be given constitutional roles to check the excesses of these rulers from unacceptable behaviours.
- iii. Community members should consider the personal characteristics of the traditional rulers and leaders before selecting and empowering an individual to take authority as a traditional leader in any community.
- iv. The people who mandate their traditional rulers and leaders to function in a different capacity in carrying out various developmental activities should follow up on the activities of traditional leaders to ensure that they do what is right, and when it is necessary.
- v. Credible persons should be positioned as leaders so they can participate successfully at each stage of the community development program

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